

**FRESNO, CA** - Today, Congressman Jim Costa (CA-20) led the effort to help retain the 20<sup>th</sup> District's Lemoore Naval Air Station; headquartered in Lemoore, California. Congressman Costa sent a letter to Secretary Rumsfeld stressing the necessary and vital role Lemoore Naval Air Station plays not only in the Valley, but also throughout the state of California.

The text of the letter follows.

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

I urge that Lemoore Naval Air Station (NAS), located in Kings and Fresno Counties, California not be included in the 2005 round of Base Realignment and Closure ("BRAC").

Lemoore NAS is the tenth largest military base in the State of California. It is home to the Strike Fighter Wing U.S. Pacific Fleet, which provides combat ready strike fighter squadrons trained to conduct carrier-based, all weather, attack, fighter and support missions for the Pacific Fleet. Presently, ten F/A-18 fleet units are based at Lemoore NAS.

Additionally, Lemoore NAS is home to the Strike Fighter Weapons School. The mission of this installation is to provide formal standardized graduate level training covering every aspect of FA-18 weapons employment. This nationally important program helps the Navy to guarantee the combat readiness of the Strike Fighter Community by providing training in mission planning, tactics, weapons systems and ordnance handling to ensure every squadron is prepared to enter any combat contingency and win.

Removal of Lemoore NAS would also have a devastating effect on the Central Valley. Lemoore NAS provides the local economy with 5,364 military jobs and 799 civilian jobs. In 2003, Kings County had an unemployment rate of 14.3%. Additionally, 21.8% of the citizens of Fresno County lived below the poverty level. Loss of Lemoore would be a critical blow to

the region.

Lemoore is a critical underpinning to the local economy. As you know, President Bush issued Executive Order 13173 to create an Interagency Task Force on the Economic

Development of the Central San Joaquin Valley. The Task Force was chartered to coordinate federal agencies and resources to advance the economic development of the Central San Joaquin Valley. As an appointed member of that Task Force, you can appreciate the economic problems that this area faces, as the City of Fresno and its airport qualify both as Federal Empowerment Zones and California Enterprise Zones. The Central Valley receives \$1900 less per capita than the rest of the United States in federal tax dollars returned to local communities.

In addition, Lemoore NAS conducts joint training missions with Army and National Guard aircraft located nearby. Loss of the Lemoore would undermine that ongoing joint training.

It should be noted that in the previous four BRAC rounds, the Commission directed Lemoore to receive in the 1991 and 1993 round. This base continues to enjoy no encroachment issues, and widespread local support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jim Costa

Member of Congress